

Mr. Chairman, the AmeriCorps program has done great things for Texas and this Nation as a whole, as is reflected in the AmeriCorps members pledge to "get things done." I am indeed honored to support this wonderful program which represents the very best of the United States of America.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Committee on Education and Labor for all of their work in bringing this bill to the floor today.

National service is one of the most productive, cost efficient investments the Federal Government can make.

My wife Betsi and I were Peace Corps volunteers and we call ourselves volunteers because we gave 2 years of our lives in service to others.

AmeriCorps is a similar program to Peace Corps. It takes 18, 19, 20-year-old kids and gives them an opportunity to work in a program mentored by various nonprofit organizations.

The passion of participants in Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and other national service programs is undeniable. As they give back to their country they also learn something about themselves, each other, and the world around them.

I am pleased H.R. 2857 expands the AmeriCorps program and increases the education award, which participants in the program receive upon completion of service.

As the cost of a college education increases, students often have to choose between public service careers and other jobs to pay back student loans.

I am also pleased we are making amendments in order under this rule because I believe they will strengthen this underlying reauthorization.

Congresswoman MATSUI and I have offered an amendment to streamline funding for State and national AmeriCorps programs, which will encourage coordination, efficiency, and high quality programs.

Furthermore, this amendment will improve the collaboration between State and national entities to better serve local needs.

Congressman McDERMOTT, Congressman FARR and I have offered an amendment to establish a Congressional Commission on Civic service that will investigate ways to increase and encourage service opportunities throughout the country.

The Commission will consider and promote ideas to inspire community service initiatives around the Nation.

There is no substitute for the passion of our Nation's volunteers, who can be found mentoring students, building houses, assisting senior citizens or beautifying our national parks.

As a co-sponsor of this legislation, I am proud to support national service initiatives and encourage my colleagues to support this important reauthorization today.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a minute to recognize an enduring legacy of John F. Kennedy—the Peace Corps—in recognition of its 47th anniversary this year. It is an honor to serve with the likes of my colleague and friend CHRIS SHAYS and others in this body and the others who serve our country in the enhancement of citizen diplomacy. I hope all Americans will join us in supporting and expanding this enduring commitment to convey our values as a Nation.

As Fareed Zakaria wrote: "We must begin to think about life after Bush—a cheering prospect for his foes, a dismaying one for his fans (however few there may be at the moment). In 11 months he will be a private citizen, giving speeches to insurance executives. America, however, will have to move on and restore its place in the world. To do this we must first tackle the consequences of our foreign policy of fear. Having spooked ourselves into believing that we have no option but to act fast, alone, unilaterally and pre-emptively, we have managed in six years to destroy decades of international good will, alienate allies, embolden enemies and yet solve few of the major international problems we face."

The London Financial Times last December reported that the U.S. has suffered a significant loss of power and prestige around the world in the years since the beginning of this century, limiting our ability to influence international crises, according to an annual survey from a well regarded British security think-tank. The 2007 Strategic Survey of the non-partisan International Institute for Strategic Studies' picked the decline of U.S. authority as one of the most important security developments of the past year—but suggested the fading of American prestige began earlier, largely due to its failings in Iraq.

One of our most special and effective citizen agencies of public diplomacy is the Peace Corps. Think of this—more than 187,000 volunteers have served this venerable legacy of former President Kennedy, serving in 139 countries—where they bring our values to other peoples, and bring understanding and appreciation of other cultures back home.

The greatest gift of the Peace Corps and other civilian programs is not just that ordinary Americans share their values and our culture with other peoples, but also that when volunteers return, they bring greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

Foreign policy is not just what we do, but also who we are. America as a place has often been the great antidote to U.S. foreign policy—and it should be again. Mr. Zakaria writes that "When American actions across the world have seemed harsh, misguided or unfair, America itself has always been open, welcoming and tolerant. . . ."

At the end of the day, our openness is our greatest foreign policy. We have succeeded not because of the ingenuity of our government, but rather because of efforts like this unique program to keep ourselves open to the world—to sending our people out across the countries of the world to share our unique culture, our goods and services, our ideas and inventions, our people and cultures. This openness, this civilian diplomacy, has allowed us to make friends across boundaries. It will be central to our place as a nation in the future.

This week, as we celebrate National Peace Corps Week, we honor the more than 190,000 volunteers who have served in 139 developing countries since President Kennedy's call to service in 1961—and I honor 44 of my constituents currently serving our country in places as diverse as China, Mali, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, El Salvador, and Namibia. This can be lonely and demanding service, but service that can create enduring friendships and values that transcend boundaries and cultures.

Today, more than 8,000 Peace Corps volunteers around the world are currently providing

training and education in 74 countries. These volunteers each donate their time and skills for over 2 years, in order to make a difference in the world and to promote understanding between cultures. By offering their valuable skills and showing a passion for helping others, they show the world that Americans value learning and cross-cultural exchange.

Volunteers work in areas of education, health and HIV/AIDS, business development, environment, agriculture and youth, and must often be creative and flexible when living and working in new cultures and learning new languages. The resulting experience is rewarding for all involved, and it highlights the importance of cooperation and involvement between cultures around the globe.

When volunteers return home and share their overseas experiences with their communities, the Peace Corps helps Americans as much as the people in developing countries. From recent college graduates to doctors with decades of experience, volunteers choose to use their valuable skills and education to help people all over the world, but their work affects their lives long after returning home.

This week we remember the dedication and passion of Peace Corps volunteers, young and old, current and returned. We thank them for their service, and encourage more Americans to volunteer with the Peace Corps.

SWORN-IN VOLUNTEERS IN THE DISTRICT OF VA-08

Volunteer Name, Country of Service, Start of SVC Date, Projected COS Date

Adriance, Joel E, ECUADOR, 31-Aug-2005, 30-Sep-2008.

Armitage, Emily M, BULGARIA, 19-Oct-2006, 10-Oct-2008.

Arnaoudova, Ina M, AZERBAIJAN, 13-Sep-2006, 12-Sep-2008.

Ballenger, Charles J, EL SALVADOR, 30-Nov-2006, 28-Nov-2008.

Banks, Cecilia M, ECUADOR, 31-Aug-2005, 30-Sep-2008.

Bergin, Sarah M, SURINAME, 03-Aug-2006, 03-Aug-2008.

Braslavsky, Gelena, BULGARIA, 29-Jun-2007, 30-Jun-2009.

Cabrera, Luis J, NICARAGUA, 20-Jul-2007, 17-Jul-2009.

Calnan, Shannon M, ROMANIA, 27-Jul-2007, 26-Jul-2009.

Chadbourne IV, Charles C, COSTA RICA, 14-Sep-2006, 19-Sep-2008.

Cohen, Matthew B, GHANA, 21-Aug-2007, 20-Aug-2009.

Davies, Meghan E, HONDURAS, 20-Apr-2006, 14-Mar-2008.

Doherty, Jennifer J, JAMAICA, 25-Aug-2006, 25-Aug-2008.

Ferrara, Erin J, FIJI, 03-Aug-2006, 03-Aug-2008.

Ficke, Melanie K, HONDURAS, 07-Sep-2006, 06-Sep-2008.

GarciaLahiguera, Andres J, ROMANIA, 27-Jul-2007, 26-Jul-2009.

Geurtsen, Christopher P, VANUATU, 21-Jun-2007, 19-Jun-2009.

Glock, Porter O, FIJI, 03-Aug-2006, 03-Aug-2008.

Guachamin, Marcela A, COSTA RICA, 18-May-2007, 15-May-2009.

Gustafson, Kevin L, GUYANA, 26-Jul-2007, 25-Jul-2009.

Houk, Kathryn G, BOLIVIA, 28-Jul-2006, 01-Aug-2008.

Huckstep, Melanie L, CHINA, 07-Sep-2007, 08-Sep-2009.

Hurley, Emelia M, BOLIVIA, 13-Apr-2006, 11-Apr-2008.

Infantino, Ann Marie C, HONDURAS, 27-Sep-2007, 25-Sep-2009.